AN INQUIRY CONCERNING AL-MAHDI

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AL-MAHDI

By :

MUHAMMAD BAQIR AS-SADR

An introduction condescended by his Eminence Ayatu'llah as-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr, may his noble patronage be preserved as a blessing for this great comprehensive work.

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR ISLAMIC SERVICES
TEHRAN -IRAN.

In the Name of Allah,
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all beings;
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgement;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray for succour;
Guide us in the straight path;
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
who are immune from Thy wrath
and have never gone astray.

O'Allah send your blessings to the head of
your messengers and the last of
your prophets, Muhammad
and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your
prophets and envoys.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن الرحيم
مالك يوم الدين إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين
اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين
أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم
ولا الضالين

اللهم صل على
سيد رسلك وخاتم أنبيائك
محمد وآله الطيبين الطاهرين
وصل على جميع الأنبياء والمرسلين

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Dear Reader,

The book you now have in hand is one of the many Islamic publications distributed by this Organization throughout the world in different languages with the aim of conveying the message of Islam to the people of the world.

You may read this book carefully and should you be interested to have further study on such publications you can contact us through a letter. Naturally, if we find you to be a keen and energetic reader we shall give you a deserving response in sending you some other publications of this Organization.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

« وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الأَرْضِ
وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ
الْوَارِثِينَ » ٥ : القصص .

In the Name of Allah,
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful

And we want to bestow our favours on those who were oppressed on earth, and make them leaders of mankind and make them the inheritors. (The Story, 28:5)

FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the English translation of the book *Bahth hawl al-Mahdi* (An Enquiry Concerning al-Mahdi). Praise be to Allah for the success we have had in our progress to this book. It is enough, by way of introduction to say that the author, as-Sayyid Muhammad Bdqir as-Sadr is one of the great scholars of Islamic thought, and it is enough, by way of introduction to as-Sayyid as-Sadr, to let him introduce himself by his works and writings; the only thing we can do is to enable the worthy readers to become acquainted with his thought. The reader can see for himself the stature of the writer from studying his works, of which the present book is an example, albeit small, but containing great meaning.

This is the fourth book which we have so far published from the writings of as-Sayyid as-Sadr in the English language. And we pray to Alldh, may He be praised that He guide our steps, and lead us in the right path. He is the best Guide, the best Helper.

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR ISLAMIC SERVICES,
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INTRODUCTION

Not only is al-Mahdi (the Guided One) a materialization of an Islamic belief of a spiritual nature, but a model to a particular goal which humanity has been striving to achieve, as well as a form to a natural inspiration, through which people came to realize - in spite of their different faith and means of access to the unseen - that there is an appointed day on earth, when the Divine messages will be fulfilled in all their great significance and final aim, when the exhausting march which humanity took in the course of history will lead to stability and security, after a long struggle.

However, the awareness of this expected future is not limited to those who believe in the unseen from a religious angle, but it has extended to others and has even been reflected in those ideologies which strongly denied the existence of the unseen and any of its aspects, such as dialectical materialism, that interpreted history in terms of contradictions, but at last admitted the fact that there was an appointed time in which these contradictions would be resolved when peace and harmony would prevail on earth.

Thus we find that the psychological experience of this awareness, which humanity has undertaken in the course of time, is one of the widest and most commonly held among people.

So, if religion strengthens this awareness by reaffirming that at the end of matter, the earth will be filled with justice after having been filled with injustice and tyranny, it is in reality providing it with its objective value and turning it into a

decisive belief in human destiny, which is not only a source of consolation but of generosity and strength.

A source of generosity, since belief in al-Mahdi is in reality belief in the protest against all forms of oppression and tyranny although they still prevail in the world.

It is also a source of strength and a refutation that cannot dwindle, since it is a ray of light that is continually struggling against despair within peo ple and keeping the flame of hope ablaze within their hearts in spite of the gloomy conditions and the might of oppression under which they live, because the appointed day confirms the fact that justice can challenge a world filled with transgression and tyranny, that it can shake its foundations, and rebuild it anew; that oppression is only an unnatural condition, regardless of its power and extent in the different corners of the world; that it will eventually be defeated; that the

ultimate defeat of oppression while on the summit of its glory, brings great hope before every persecuted individual and every oppressed nation, in tipping the balance and rebuilding the world.

If the idea of al-Mahdi is older and wider than Islam, the detailed outlines, which the latter has fixed for it, have proved more satisfactory to all those ambitions that have been seeking its realization since the dawn of history as well as a more generous gift and a stonger prediction for the feelings of those who have been persecuted and oppressed in the course of history. This is because Islam has turned the idea from the unseen into reality, and from an aspiration for a saviour the world would produce in the distant and unknown future into the conviction that he actually exists looking forward with other people to that day and the right circumstances that would make it possible for him to assume his great role.

Thus, al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) is no

longer an idea waiting to be materialized nor a prophecy that needs to be substantiated, but a living reality and a particular person, living among us in flesh and blood, who is sharing our hopes, suffering, sorrows and joys, actually witnessing all the sufferings, sadness and transgression that exist on the surface of the earth, who is affected with all this from near or far, who is waiting for the appropriate moment when he can stretch his hands to every oppressed and needy person and eradicate the tyrants.

However, it has been decreed that this expected leader is not to reveal anything concerning his life or person to other people, although he is living amongst them, waiting for the appointed moment.

It is obvious that thinking in terms of these Islamic indictions narrows the gap of the unseen between the oppressed people and the expected saviour and reduces the psychological distance between him and them, no matter how long the

expectation may last.

So, when we are supposed, as far as we are concerned, to consider the idea of al-Mahdi as actually designating a particular living person who is observing events like we are, it is to inspire us with the fact that the idea of the unconditional protest against all sorts of transgression and tyranny, which al-Mahdi stands for, has already materialized in the expected dissident leader who will emerge, paying no homage to the transgressors, as it has been mentioned in the *hadith* (tradition), and that by believing in him we are in reality believing in this unyielding and living protest and participating in it.

Indeed lots of *ahadith* (traditions) are constantly urging those who believe in al-Mahdi to expect release from suffering and be prepared for his coming, which is a consolidation of that spiritual bond and emotional tie between them and the dissident leader and every value he stands for both

of which could not have existed had he not actually materialized as a contemporary living person.

Thus we come to realize that this materialization has given a new impetus to the idea and made it a source of strength and generosity of a higher degree in terms of what any dissident individual finds of comfort consolation and relief from the pains that he has to suffer under tyranny and deprivation, when he comes to feel that his Imdm and leader shares them with him, since the latter is a contemporary person and not an idea to be realized in the future.

However, the above mentioned materialization has led many people, who found it hard to believe or assume, to take negative attitudes even regarding the idea of al-Mahdi.

Since they all wonder if the idea of al-Mahdi actually designates a living person who has coexisted with all these consecutive generations for

more than ten centuries, who will continue to do so until the time comes for him to emerge on the surface, how can such a human being live all this long and yet be immune from the laws of nature which compel any person to pass by the phase of old age and decrepitude and from there to his death. Is not such a matter impossible from an existential point of view?

Also, why should Allah show all this desire for this particular person - for whom the laws of nature would be obstructed - and endeavours to prolong his life and preserve him for the appointed day; has humanity become barren from yielding capable leaders? Why should not that day come when a leader will be born at its dawn and grow up like anyone else and gradually assume his role until the earth be filled with justice after having been filled with injustice and transgression?

They also wonder if al-Mahdi is the name of a particular person, who is the son of the elev-

enth Imdm of the family of the Prophet (Ahlu'1-bayt - peace and blessing of Alldh be upon them), born in the year 256 A.H. whose father died in the year 260 A.H. . This means that he was very young when his father died, not exceeding the age of five, which is too early for him to have completed his religious and intellectual education at the hands of his father. Therefore how and by what means could he personally be prepared to assume that great role from religious, intellectual and scientific angles.

Moreover, if the leader is ready why should he wait all these hundreds of years? Is not what the world has witnessed of afflictions and social disasters enough to justify his appearance on its surface for the establishing of justice on earth?

They also wonder how can we believe in his existence even if we were to assume that this could be possible? Can anybody admit the validity of a hypothesis of this kind when it is not actually

supported by any conclusive legal or scientific evidence? Should some narratives *(ahadith)* related to the Prophet (blessing and peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny), of which we doubt the authenticity be enough for us to approve such a hypothesis?

As far as the role that this individual is going to play on the appointed day is concerned they wonder how a single person can assume this great decisive role in the world, while we know that however great an individual is, he cannot create history nor lead it into a new phase; whereas the seeds of any historical movement ripen under certain objective circumstances and their coming together; and the sublimity of the individual is the factor which selects him to shape these objective circumstances and provide the required solutions?

They also wonder how we can imagine what this individual would achieve of enormous change and decisive victory for justice and its message

against the realities of injustice, oppression and tyranny in spite of what they have of power and influence and what they possess of means of destruction as well as what they have achieved of high standards in scientific, political, social and military capabilities.

Questions in this connection recur often in one form or another, however the true motives behind them are not only intellectual, since they have also a psychological source expressed in terms of the fear that dominates the world and the meagerness of all opportunity of change from the roots. Therefore, doubts deepen and questions increase, the more one becomes aware of the harsh reality that has prevailed in the world in the course of time. Thus failure, meagerness and the weakness that the human being is subject to lead him to feel under a psychological pressure whenever he attempts to imagine the tremendous change of the world which would relieve it of its contradictions and historical oppression and would pro-

vide it with a new structure based on justice and truth, This pressure makes the individual doubt the whole concept of change and leads him to refuse it for one reason or another.

As far as we are concerned, we are going to deal with all these questions in sequence answering each one briefly due to the limits provided by these pages.

(1) HOW WAS THIS LONG LIFE GRANTED TO AL-MAHDI

In other words, is it possible for a man to live for many centuries, as is the case with the Expected Leader, for the change of the world, whose age must be actually one thousand one hundred and forty years, or fourteen times the average age of an ordinary person who would pass through the phases of life from childhood to old age normally.

The word possibility here has one of the three following meanings, namely: Practical possibility, scientific possibility and philosophical or logical possibility.

I mean by practical possibility that a task is feasible in a manner that enables me, you or a third person to perform it, such as taking a journey across the ocean, reaching the depth of the sea or

going to the moon, all of which are practically possible since they have actually been performed by people in one way or another.

By scientific possibility I mean that there are some tasks that neither I nor you nor a third person can practically perform with the means that are accessible to present civilization. However there is nothing in the alterable trends of science which can indicate a justification for the rejection of the possibility of these tasks and their occurrence conforming to certain special circumstances and means. For example, there is nothing in science that could deny the possibility of travelling to Venus, because all its existing trends indicate the possibility of such a task, although that is still not possible for me or you since the difference between going to the moon and travelling to Venus is only one of degree. The latter representing a stage of overcoming some relative difficulties stemming from the fact that the distance is longer. From this we deduce that it is scientifically possible to

travel to Venus even if it is still not feasible from a practical angle.

Contrary to that is the idea of travelling to the sun in distant space since it is scientifically impossible, meaning that science would never entertain the possibility of this task, for one cannot assume scientifically or empirically the possibility of inventing that preventive armour that could protect the body against the heat of the sun which is like an enormous kiln constantly burning with a degree impossible to imagine.

By logical or philosophical possibility I mean that there is nothing in the intellect, conforming to what it knows of previous laws - (preceding the experiment) - that could justify the rejection of a task nor decide that it could not occur.

Say, for example, the grouping of three oranges into two equal parts, this is logically impossible, since the intellect knows - before carrying

out such an experiment - that three is an odd number, thus it is impossible to divide it into two equal parts, first it would turn into an even number, which would be a contradiction, which is impossible in logic.

But if a man were to be exposed to fire, or if he were to go to the sun without burning, that would not be impossible from a logical point of view, since there is no contradiction in the assumption that heat does not penetrate into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature. That would only run contrary to the experiment which proved that heat actually penetrates into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature until both bodies get an equal temperature.

Therefore, we come to realize that logical possibility has a wider scope than scientific possibility and that the latter is wider than practical possibility.

There is no doubt about the logical possibility of the prolongation of human life for some thousands of years, because that is not imposs ible from an abstract intellectual point of view, also there is no contradiction in an assumption of this sort, since life as it is understood does not fathom sudden death and no one can dispute this fact.

Also, there is no doubt or controversy that this prolonged life is not possible from the practical aspect, as is the case in going down to the depths of the ocean or ascending to the moon. That is because science with what it owns of modern means and instruments, that were made available by concomitant human experiments, cannot prolong human life for hundreds of years, this is why we find that even those among people who are more eager about life and more able to utilize scientific possibilities can only live to the extent of what is usual.

As far as scientific possibility is concerned, there is nothing in science, nowadays which could justify the denial of that fact from a theoretical point of view. This inquiry is in reality related to the nature of the physiological interpretation of the phenomenon of old-age and decripitude among people. Does this phenomenon indicate a natural law that compels the tissues of the human body and its cells to harden gradually and become less efficient in the performance of their task once they have reached the summit of their growth, until they die at a particular moment, even if we were to isolate them from the influence of some external failure? Or is this hardening of the bodily tissues and cells and the lack of efficiency in the performance of their physiological tasks a result of their struggle against certain external factors, such as microbes or poison that penetrate the body from an excess in food or from the heavy work that the person might perform or any other factor.

Now this is the question that science has to find an answer to, yet many answers present themselves on a scientific level in this respect.

If we are to consider the scientific point of view that tends to interpret old-age and the weakness that goes with it, as a result of reactions against some external factors, it means that it is theoretically possible, once we have isolated the tissues that compose the body from these influences, to prolong life to the extent of surpassing the phenomenon of old-age and even overcoming it.

On the other hand, if we consider the other point of view which sees old-age as a natural process with regards to the living tissues and cells, it will mean that they hear within themselves the seed of their own ultimate death, once the phase of old-age has been completed.

I say: If we take this point of view into consideration it should not mean that there is no

flexibility in this natural law, rather the assumption o£ its existence shows that it is in fact flexible, since we find in our everyday life, in addition to what has been found by scientists through the experiments that they carry out in their laboratories, that old-age as a phys;.ological phenomenon has no fixed time, since a man can be very old and yet possess tender limbs, with no trace of old-age appearing on him as has been mentioned by some doctors. Moreover some scientists take advantage of this flexibility and prolong the life of some animals by a hundred times their natural age, by creating certain circumstances and factors that delay the process of old-age.

Thus it has been proved scientifically that this process can be postponed, by creating specific circumstances and factors, even if this experiment has not been carried out by science on a particular complicated creature such as the human being, owing to the difference in the difficulty of carrying it out on the human being and other organisms.

This means that, from a theoretical point of view, science, with all its alterable orientations, has never had any objection to the prolongation of human life, whether old-age has been interpreted as the product of a struggle and close contact with some external influences, or as a result of a natural process of the cells and tissues that leads them towards their death.

Thus we deduce that the prolongation of human life and its survival over many centuries is possible logically as well as scientifically but it is still impossible from a practical angle, and that nevertheless scientific progress has a long way to go before realizing this possibility.

In light of what has been discussed we shall deal with the age of al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) and what has been surrounding it of wonder and surprise.

Thus we notice that since the possibility of

this prolonged life has been confirmed both logically and scientifically, science is in the process of gradually transforming the theoretical possibility into a practical one. There is no room left for wonder except the remoteness of the probability that al-Mahdi might have preceded science in this transformation, before that the latter could have, in its evolutionary course, reached the standard of actual capacity for such a transformation, which would make him equal to that person who had preceded science in discovering the cure for cancer.

The question now is - How could Islam - which determined the age of the Expected Leader - have preceded science in the field of this transformation?

The answer is that this is not the only field in which Islam preceded science. Has the Islamic shari `ah (revealed law) as a whole not come before science and the evolution of human thought by many centuries? Did it not promulgate certain

symbols that submitted plans to be put into practice, which man could achieve only after hundreds of years of his independent activity? Did it not formulate certain regulations perfect in wisdom, the secrets of which were realized by man only after a certain length of time? Did the Divine message not reveal mysteries about the universe, that could never have occurred to people's minds, which science came later to confirm and support?

So, if we are convinced by these facts why then should we regard as too much that the sender of this message - the Exalted - anticipates science in determining the age of al-Mahdi ?

Here I mentioned only those aspects of precedence that we can notice in a direct manner, we can also include the aspects of precedence mentioned in the Divine message, for example, when it informs us about the night journey which the Prophet undertook from al-Hardm Mosque to al-Aqsd Mosque. If we are to understand this

journey within the frame of natural laws, we will find that it shows that these laws were utilized in a way that science could achieve only after hundreds of years.

Therefore, the same Divine knowledge which enabled the Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to undertake this fast motion before science could achieve it, has also enabled his designated successors to have a prolonged life before science could realize such a project.

Certainly, this prolonged age that Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed on the Expected Saviour may seem rather strange, if it is considered within the limits of the everyday in people's lives and what has been achieved by the experiments of scientists. But is the decisive and transformative role which has been prepared for this Saviour not strange within the limits of the ordinary in people's lives and what they have experienced of historical

evolution? Has he not been entrusted with the task of changing the world and rebuilding its civilization on the basis of justice and truth? Why should we disapprove if the preparation of this great role is characterized by strange and unusual aspects, such as the prolongation of the Expected Leader's age? For this remoteness of those aspects and their unusual aspects, however great they are, cannot surpass the remoteness of the great role that has to be achieved on the appointed day? Therefore, if we approve the validity of that unique role from a historical angle in spite of the fact that there has never been in the history of humanity a role similar to it, why should not we also approve that prolonged age which is still unique in our ordinary life?

I wonder if it is a coincidence that only two individuals should carry out the task of emptying human civilization of its corrupt elements and re building it, which means that they must have been of an excessive age many times superior to our

ordinary lives. The first is Nuh (Noah) who had assumed his role in the humanity's past. The Qur'an mentioned that he had lived among his people for nine hundred and fifty years. His role was to reconstruct the world after the Great Flood.

The other one is al-Mahdi, who is to assume his role in the future, who has lived among his people until now for more than a thousand years. It has been ordained that he will reconstruct the world on the appointed day.

Why then should we accept Noah, who must have reached a thousand years at least, and yet reject al-Mahdi?

(2) THE MIRACLE AND THE LONG LIFE

Up to now we have seen that the prolongation of life is scientifically possible. But let us suppose that it is not, that the process of old-age and de crepitude is quite rigid, that it cannot either now or in the long run overcome nor alter its conditions or circumstances - what will this mean? It will mean that the prolongation of human life - as is the case of Noah, or al-Mahdi - runs contrary to the natural laws which science confirmed thanks to modern instruments of experimentation. Thus this condition becomes a miracle that has hindered

the applicability of a natural law under a certain circumstances, in order to preserve the life of a particular individual whose role is to cherish the Divine message.

Yet this is not the only miracle of its kind, nor is it remote from a Muslim's faith, which derives from the Qur'dn and the sunnah. More over the process of old-age is no more rigid than is the process of the passage of heat from a body of higher temperature to another of lower temperature until both of them become equal. This had occurred in the case of Ibrdhim (peace be upon him) when the only way to preserve his life was by hindering that process, when it was said to the fire in which he was thrown

قُلْنَا يَانَارُكُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ *

(الانبياء ، ٢١: ٦٩)

We said, *"O fire be cool* on *Ibrdhim* and *keep him safe."* (Qur'dn, 21:69)

So, he emerged from it safe and unharmed. There are also other cases where natural laws were hindered to protect some of the prophets or Proofs of Allah on earth. When the sea was split for Musa (Moses), when the Romans were misled in thinking they had caught 'isa (Jesus) or when Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) left his house, while it was surrounded by the troops of Quraysh who were waiting for hours to attack him but Allah, 'the Exalted, hid him from their eyes while he was walking in their midst. All of these cases show a hindrance of the laws of nature to protect an individual, whom the Divine wisdom wished to preserve. Therefore, why not include here the process of old-age and decrepitude?

From this we can deduce a general notion, which is that whenever the preservation of the Prophet's life (the Proof of Allah on earth) de pends on the hindrance of a natural law, and the prolongation of his life comes to be necessary for

the performance of his task, Divine care then intervenes by delaying the process so that the task of that individual can be accomplished., On the other hand, once the Divine mission of that individual has been fulfilled he either dies naturally or as a martyr depending on what is determined by natural laws.

Thus we find ourselves confronted with the present question in connection with this general notion: How can the process be obstructed? How can the necessary correlation that exitsts between natural phenomena, be sundered? Does it not contradict science, which discovered the existence of that natural law or process and defined that necessary correlation on experimental and deductive bases ?

The answer is that science has already solved the problem by giving up the idea of necessity as far as natural laws are concerned. To clarify this we can say that science discovers natural laws

through systematic observations and experiments. For example, when the occurrence of a natural phenomenon is followed another one, we deduce from this a natural law which is: that whenever the first phenomenon comes into existence it is automatically followed by another phenomenon.

However, science does not propose a necessary correlation between the two phenomena stemming from their nature, since necessity is an invisible condition that experimentation and the instruments of scientific and inductive inquiry cannot demonstrate. Therefore, the logic of modern science emphasizes that natural law - as it is defined by science - does not indicate a necessary correlation, but an uninterrupted connection, between two phenomena. But when the miracle occurs and separates one from the other, it does not mean that their correlation was sundered.

The truth of the matter is that the miracle, in its religious sense, has become, in the light of

modern scientific logic, more understandable than before, under the classical view of causal correlation. This old view assumed that every two phenomena, in which one is followed automatically by the other must have a necessary correlation, which means that it is impossible to separate one from the other. However, this correlation has been transformed thanks to modern scientific logic into a law of correlation or of consecutive succession between two phenomena without the hypothesis of invisible necessity.

Thereby the miracle becomes an exceptional condition with regard to this connective succession without running against a necessity or leading to an impossibility.

So, in the light of the logical foundation of induction we agree with the modern point of view which says that induction does not demonstrate the existence of a necessary correlation between two phenomena. We find that it shows that there

is a common interpretation for the consecutive connection between the two. Since this common interpretation can be formed on the basis of the assumption of subjective necessity, it can also be formed on the assumption of a wisdom that made the Creator of the universe to continuously combine some particular phenomena with others. The same wisdom sometimes calls for exception; thus a miracle occurs.

(3) WHY ALL THIS DESIRE TO PROLONG HIS LIFE

Now we should deal with the second question which is: Why should Allah, the Exalted, show all this desire for this person in particular? Why should the natural laws be hindered just to prolong his life? Why should the leadership of the appointed day not be left to a person born in the future, who will appear then and assume his expected role?

In other words: What is the use of this long absence and what is the motive behind it? Indeed

many people ask these questions, yet at the same time none of them is prepared to accept the Divine answer for them. However we believe that the twelve Imdms form a unique group of individuals, none of whom could be substituted. But these people require a social interpretation of the situation, in the light of tangible realities, for the great operation of change and the understandable requirements for the appointed day.

On these bases, we will temporarily disregard the characteristics that we believe should be fulfilled in the infallible Imdms and ask the following questions

As far as the expected operation of change, of the appointed day, is concerned and as far as it is understandable in the light of the norms and the experiences of life, can we consider the prolonged age of its preserved leader as one of the factors for its success? And of his ability to lead it in a better way ?

We can give an affirmative answer to this question because of many reasons among which are the following

First, that the great operation of change requires from its leader a unique psychological attitude, filled with a sense of success and a sense of the insignificance of the mighty existence which he has been prepared to struggle against and transform into a new civilized world.

Thus the more the leader's heart is filled with the triviality of the civilization he is fighting, and the clearer is his sense that it is no more than a speck of dust on the long path of human civilization, the more he is ready from a psychological angle, to oppose, resist and persevere in his efforts against it until victory is achieved.

It is clear, therefore, that the scope required from this psychological attitude ought to be proportionate to the size of change to be brought

about and what needs to be rooted out of civili-aation and existence. So, whenever the opposition is to a mightier existence and a loftier and deeply rooted civilization, the greater is the thrust required from this psychological attitude.

Since the message of the appointed day is to change, in a comprehensive way, a world filled with injustice and tyranny, it is therefore natural that it is looking for an individual whose psychological attitude is superior to that whole world; a person whose age exceeds those who were born in that world and who were brought up in the shade of its civilization which he is to destroy and replace with one based on justice and truth. For whoever is brought up in a deeply-rooted civilization, that dominates the world with its values and modes of thinking, would be overwhelmed by it, since he would have been born while it had been in existence, and opened his eyes just to see its different aspects, and would have been brought up under its power and influence. Unlike that is a

person who has deeply penetrated history, who has come to life long before that civilization which completes the cycle of the story of humanity before the appointed day saw the light. He sees it as little seeds, hardly visible, then gradually growing and taking roots within human societies, waiting for the right moment to blossom and appear. Then he witnesses it, as it starts to grow and advance, sometimes relapsing, sometimes meeting with success, then when it begins to prosper and become gigantic, gradually dominating the destinies of the world, such a man who has lived through all these stages with sagacity and caution, watching this giant - (against which he has to struggle) - under that long historical perspective which he has lived in reality, and not just read about in books of history, such an individual would consider it as a definite destiny, unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau's consideration of the monarchy in France, when he was terrified at the mere imagining of France without a king, in spite of the fact that he was one of the heralds, both intellectually and philo-

sophically, of the evolution of the political situation that existed in those times. That was because Rousseau lived in the shade and under the influence of the monarchy.

On the other hand this individual who has thoroughly penetrated history, would have the dignity and strength of history and a powerful sense that all that surrounds him of civilization and existence was born at a certain time in history, when the way was paved for its existence, that it would disappear to the extent that nothing of it would remain as when there was nothing of it before it came into existence in the distant or near past, that the historical life spans of any civilization, however long they may be, are only limited days in the long era of history.

Have you not read the chapter of the cave in the Qur'dn *(surah al-Kahf)?* Have you not read of those youths who believed in their Lord, whom Allah increased in guidance, who opposed

a ruling pagan existence that was ruthless and did not hesitate to suppress every single seed of at-tawhid (Unity of Allah), so that it might not rise above the level of idolatory. So these youths became depressed to the point of despair, once the windows of hope had been closed before their eyes; so they sought refuge in the cave, where they begged Alldh for a solution to their problem after having exhausted all the possibilities. For they could not tolerate the fact that falsehood was ruling, transgressing and subjugating the truth and suppressing anyone whose heart showed an inclination towards the truth. Do you know what Alldh did to them? He made them sleep for three hundred and nine years in that cave and caused them to rise up from their long sleep and sent them to the ouside world, after that the existence which had bewildered them with its power and transgression had collapsed and became a chapter in history that could frighten no one nor activate anything. They were brought out so that they could see all this with their own eyes and learn

that falsehood is insignificant.

Indeed if this clear vision had been true in the case of the people of the cave, with all that it bore of psychological loftiness and thrust out of that unique event which prolonged their age by three hundred years, then the same event could occur in the case of al-Mahdi, the Expected Leader, whose extended age would make him see the giant as a dwarf, the tall tree as a seed and the hurricane as a breeze.

Add to this that the experience that is granted by the concomitants of those consecutive civilizations and the direct confrontation with all their movements and changes, has a great influence on the intellectual preparation and the deepening of experience of the Expected Leader, since it puts him face to face with the many various practices of others, with all they contain of weakness and strength, and the different aspects of their errors and accuracy. And this enables him to classify the

social symptoms with a complete awareness of their causes and their historical circumstances.

Moreover the preserved operation of change, which is the task of the Expected Leader, is founded on a particular message, namely the message of Islam. Therefore, it is natural that in this case, the required leadership should be more proximate with the original sources of Islam, that his personality be fully shaped in an independent way, free from the influence of that civilization which is subject to his struggle on the appointed day, unlike that individual who would have been born and brought up in its atmosphere, whose intellect and feelings would have blossomed within its frame. Quite often such a person cannot free himself from the effects and residues of that civilization, even if he were to lead a movement of change against it.

Thus, in order that the preserved leader be not influenced by the civilization he has been

prepared to transform, it is necessary that his personality should be fully shaped during a previous stage of civilization, as near as possible to the universal spirit, and in terms of the principles of that civilized condition, which the appointed day is aiming at realizing under his leadership.

(4) HOW WAS THE PREPARATION OF THE EXPECTED LEADER ACHIEVED

Now we have reached the third question which is: How could the preparation of the Expected Leader be achieved, while we know that he only remained five years with his father, al-Imam al-`Askari - which is a period of childhood not sufficient for the maturity of his personality. Therefore, under what circumstances has this achievement taken place?

The answer is: That al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) was appointed as a successor to his father,

for the leadership of the Muslims, which means that he was an Imam in the fullest intellectual and spiritual sense of the word in a very early age of his noble life.

Moreover, the early Imamate (leadership) is a previous phenomenon in the case of his forefathers (peace be upon them all), for example, al-Imam Muhammad son of `Ali al-Jawad (peace be upon him). We call it a phenomenon because it has given in the case of al-Mahdi's forefathers (peace be upon them), a perceptible and a practical meaning, which the Muslims have lived and been aware of, in all their experiences with the Imams, in one way or another. Therefore, we cannot claim the proof of a clearer and wider phenomenon than the experience of a whole community. So, we can clarify the issue in the following points

1) The leadership of the Imams of Ahlu'1-bayt (descendants of the Prophet) has never been

one of the centres of influence and power that are transmitted through inheritance, from father to son, with the full support of the ruling regime, as was the case, in the leadership of Fdtimid caliphs and the `Abbdsids; but it has always won the good will of its wider popular bases, on the grounds of their intellectual and spiritual conviction about the worth of the Imdmate for the leadership of Islam.

2) These popular bases have existed since the dawn of Islam and became wider during the times of the two Imdms, al-Bdqir and as-Sddiq (peace be upon them). The school that these two Imams led within the boundaries of these bases formed a very wide trend that stretched all all over the world of Islam, bringing together hundreds of jurists *(fugahd')* theologians *(mutakallimun)* and commentators *(mufassirun)* on the Qur'dn and the learned in the different branches of Islamic and human sciences that were predominent in those times, to the extent that al-Hasan son of

'Ali al-Washsha said, "I went into al-Kixfah Mosque and found nine hundred sheikhs all of them were saying, 'Ja'far son of Muhammad related to us . . . , "

3) This school and what it represented of popular bases from Islamic society, had certain conditions which it believed in and abode by, in the appointment of the Imam and his suitability for the role because it believed that an individual cannot be appointed as Imam unless he is the most learned among the agnostic of his time.

4) That both this school and its popular bases were ready to give sacrifices, for the sake of their belief in the Imamate, since the latter was considered, in the opinion of the concomitant leadership, as a hostile line, even from an intellectual point of view. This was the reason that led the authorities to carry out several campaigns of purging and torture to the extent that many people were either killed or were put into prisons, while

hundreds of them died in the darkness of the cells. This meant that those who believed in the Imamate were ready to pay a lot, and the only instigation they had was their nearness to Alldh.

5) The Imdms these bases yielded to were not isolated from them, only when the authorities prosecuted them or sent them into exile. This is what we come to know through the narrators who related to us the events of each one among the twelve Imdms, and on the one hand from what has been copied from the letters that they sent to their contemporaries and the trips that they took, and on the other hand from representatives that they dispatched to the different corners of the Islamic world, as well as the frequent visits that the Shi'ahs used to pay to their Imdms in the holy city of Medina, when they went to the sacred lands for the performance of the holy rites of *hajj*. All of these factors show an uniterrupted interaction between the Imdm and his popular bases, that stretched over the different parts of the world

of Islam, with all their different classes including the learned as well as the others.

6) That the caliphate which was contemporary with the Imams (peace be upon them) used to consider their spiritual leadership as a great threat against its existence and its destiny. Because of that it deployed all of its efforts for the sake of disintergrating that leadership and bore a lot of negativism in that respect, sometimes appearing under the guise of cruelty and transgression when its security was at stake. The campaigns of persecution and victimization were a permanent event with respect to the Imam, in spite of what that left behind of sadness and disgust among the Muslims and their supporters from the different classes of society.

If we take these six points into consideration knowing that they are all historical facts, it leaves no room for doubt, and we come out with the following result: That the phenomenon of the

early Imamate was a fact and not an illusion. Because the Imdm who emerges while still young and declares openly that he is the spiritual and the intellectual leader of the Muslim community as a whole, and whom that wide trend pledges its loyalty, must surely be in possession of a remarkable, let alone a very wide knowledge and agnosis and a very wide horizon as well as a proficiency in jurisdiction, exegesis and the articles of faith, otherwise the popular bases would not be convinced of his spiritual leadership. We should also bear in mind the fact that the Imdms took certain positions that made the interaction with their bases possible and threw different lights on their way of life and personality.

Do you think then that a young child who declares his Imdmate (spiritual leadership) and hoists out of it a flag for Islam, with the full know ledge of the masses among his popular bases who believe in him and are prepared to sacrifice their lives and security without taking the trouble to

discover his condition, or without being incited by the phenomenon of the early Imamate to inquire about the validity of the situation and the establishment of the worth of this young Imdm?

Now supposing that people did not attempt to assess the situation, would it then be possible that after days, months or even years, the whole affair would go unnoticed without its truth coming to the surface, although there has been a natural and constant interaction between the young Imdm and the rest of the people? Is it rational that the worth of a young child's way of thinking and knowledge would not be obvious after this long interaction ?

Therefore, if we assume that the popular bases of the Imdms of *Ahlu'1-bayt* (descendants of the Prophet) were not able to discover the truth of the matter, why did the existing caliphate keep silent and did not attempt to find out, if it were for its benenefit ?

Nothing could have been easier for the authorities then if the Imam had been a child, quite immature in his education and way of thinking, the normal case in all children.

No plan would have been more successful than to present this child to his supporters (the Shi'ah) and others and prove to them that he was not fit for the Imamate and the intellectual and spiritual leadership.

If it is indeed difficult to convince people of a man in his forties or fifties, already in possession of a great deal of education for the role of the Imamate, there can be no difficulty in convincing them of the incapacity of an ordinary child for the same role, in the sense that the Shi'ah know, regardless of his intelligence and awareness.

All this would have been possible and easier than the complicated means of suppression and recklessness which the authorities resorted to in

these times.

The only explanation for the caliphate's hesitation in playing this card, is that it realized that the early Imdmate was a real phenomenon and not an invented idea. The truth is that it had realized the fact after it had attempted to play that card but failed. History relates to us many of these attempts and their failure, while it does not mention at all the occurrence of a situation in which the phenomenon of early Imamate was put into question, where the Imam was confronted with difficulties or complications which surpassed his ability or shook people's trust in him.

This is what we mean when we said earlier that the early Imdmate is a real phenomenon in the life of *Ahlu'1-bayt* (descendants of the Proph et), moreover this phenomenon has similar roots and situations in the Divine heritage that stretched over all the messages and the Divine leadership. It is enough to cite one example of an early leader-

ship of Ahlu'l-bayt (peace be upon them) in the case of Yahyd (peace be upon him) when Alldh said

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا *

(مريم ، ١٩ : ١٢)

"0 Yahya take the *Book* with strength," and We have given him wisdom when he was a little child (Qur'dn, 19:12)

Now that the early leadership has been proved as an existing and real phenomenon in Ahlu'l-bayt's life there is no more objection to the leader ship of al-Imam al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) nor to his succession to his father while very young.

(5) HOW CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF AL-MAHDI?

Now we have reached the fourth question which is: Supposing that the hypothesis of the Expected Leader and all that it comprehends of prolonged life, early leadership and a silent absence, is possible, that would not be enough proof for his existence, thus, how can we indeed believe in the existence of al-Mahdi ? Would some narratives related in books on the Great Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) be enough for perfect conviction in the existence of the Twelfth Imam, in spite of what

this supposition bears of peculiarity and deviation from the norms? Or rather, how can we prove that al-Mahdi had a true historical existence and that he is not only an assumption, for which psychological circumstances have been combined to confirm his existence in many people's minds?

The answer is: That the idea of al-Mahdi, as the Expected Leader, who will change the world for the best, has been already mentioned in several of the narratives *(ahadith)* related from the Great Messenger in general, and the Imams of *Ahlu'I-bayt* in particular. Moreover, it has been reconfirmed, with a degree beyond doubt, in many texts. I could count up to four hundred narratives of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) which reached us through our brothers, the Sunnis, (e.g., the book *al-Mahdi* written by my uncle as-Sayyid Sadru'd-Din as-Sadr, may Allah bless his noble soul), as well as a great number of reports about al-Imam al-Mahdi through both the Shiites and the Sunnis - nearly more than six thousand

narratives, (e.g., the book entitled *Muntakhab al-athar fi al-Imam aththdni `ashar* [Selection of traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam] by ash-Shaykh Lutfu'lldh as-Sdfi), which is very high statistical number, not found in many of the self-evident Islamic issues.

As regards the materialization of this idea in the Twelfth Imdm (peace be upon him) we do possess enough justifications to be convinced that he is the one. They can be summed up into two groups of evidence - the first Islamic, and the other scientific.

By the Islamic evidence we confirm the existence of the Expected Leader.

By the scientific evidence, we can prove that al- Mahdi is not just a myth or a supposition but a reality which has been confirmed by historical experience. The Islamic evidence appears in the hundreds of narratives related from Allah's Mess-

enger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Imdms of *Ahlu'1-bayt* (peace be upon them), which prove that al-Mahdi will be appointed as Imdm, that he is from the descendants of the Prophet and Fatimah and the ninth descendants from al-Husayn, that the caliphs (Prophet's successors) are twelve.

All of these narratives limited that universal idea by personifying it in al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imdm of *Ahlu'1-bayt.* Moreover they reached a great number and diffusion, although the Imdms took a great precaution and care, fearing their exposure on a general level, in order to protect the righteous descendants against assassination or an unpredicted assault on his life.

However, the numerical abundance of these narratives is not the only reason for their validity, for in addition to this, there are certain virtues and coherences to be taken into account for proving their validity.

The Prophet's narratives (ahadith) about the fact that the Imams, caliphs, or amirs - depending on the style of the narrative in its different ways - are twelve. Some writers counted up to more than two hundred and seventy narratives taken from the most well-known books of Sunni and Shi'ah traditions such as al-Bukhdri, al-Muslim, at-Tirmidhf, Abu Dawizd and the collection of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Rectification of the Judge on the Two Sahfhs (al-Hdkim, *Mustadrak* `ala s-sahihayn). We should bear in mind here that al-Bukhari who had compiled these narratives, was a contemporary to both al-Imam al-Hddi and al-Imam al-`Askari which means quite a lot, since it proves that the narratives were recorded from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) before that the realization of their contents and the idea of the Twelfth Imdm had materialized. This means, therefore, that there is no room left for doubt, that the recording of the narratives was not influenced by the fact of the Twelfth Imam, or that it might have been a reflection of it, because

the false narratives *(ahadith)* that are related from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) are either a reflection or a justification for a fact occurring later in time. Now, they did not precede in their appearance and recording in the books, that fact which they came to reflect, therefore, as long as we possess the material evidence, which is that the mentioned narrative had already preceded the historical sequence of the twelve Imams, and that it had been recorded in the books of *ahadith* (books of traditions) before that the event took place, we can be sure that this narrative is not a reflection of an event but an expression to a truth from Allah, uttered by the one who did not speak out of fancy (the Holy Prophet) when he said: "Surely the caliphs after me are twelve". So, the event of the twelve Imams was fulfilled, starting with al-Imam `Ali and ending in al-Mahdi, this way being the only rational interpretation to that noble narrative of the Prophet.

As far as the scientific evidence is concerned, it is formed out an experience, lived by a community of people, lasting nearly seventy years, which we call the period of the minor occultation *(ghaybah as-sughra).* To elucidate this point, we will pave the way by giving a brief description.

This minor occultation marks the first phase in the Imamate of the Expected Leader (peace be upon him). From the time that had been predes tined, from the time he assumed the role, he remained hidden from the outside world, distant from all the events that were taking place although being at the same time proximate to them in his mind and heart.

We should bear in mind that had this occultation occurred suddenly, the result would have been a great shock among the popular masses, who believed in the Imdmate since they were used to contacting their Imam in every period, to consulting him for solutions to their various

problems. Thus, had he suddenly vanished, his supporters would have felt cut off from spiritual and intellectual leadership. Such an event would have created an enormous gap which would have thoroughly shaken the whole structure and undermined its unity. Therefore, it proved necessary that the way should be paved to this occultation, so that these bases might get used to it and gradually adapt themselves to the new situation.

So the plan was this minor occultation, during which al-Imam al-Mahdi vanished from the universal scene, while keeping in touch with his popular bases and supporters through his delegates or representatives and the most reliable among his companions, who acted as a link between the Imdm and those who believed in his line.

The position of representative of the Imdm was held in those times, by four personalities, whom the popular bases agreed as to their fear of Alldh, piety and integrity. They were:

1) `Uthmdn ibn Said al-`Amri;
2) Muhammad ibn `Uthmdn ibn Said al-`Amri;
3) Abu'1-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Rah; and
4) Abu'1-Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samuri.

These four individuals assumed the role of representative of the Imdm (al-Mahdi) according to the above classification. So whenever one of them died, the other succeeded him, after being designated by al-Imam al-Mahdi (peace be upon him).

The representative of the Imdm used to get in touch with the Shi'ahs and submit their questions and problems to the Imdm and return to them with his answers. Sometimes orally and very often in a written form. So these masses who lacked the vision of their Imdm, found some comfort and consolation in these indirect communications.

Moreover they could notice that the signatures and the letters were all written in the same way, during the time of the four representatives that lasted nearly seventy years. The last representative, as-Samuri, declared that the period of the minor occultation, which was characterized by the designated delegates, was over; that the period of the major occultation, in which there would be no designated individuals to mediate between the Imam and the Shiites, had began. This transition meant that the minor occultation had already accomplished its mission and achieved its goal, since it immunized the Shiites against the great shock and the feeling of the profound gap caused by the Imdm's occultation. In that way, it enabled them to adapt themselves to the situation and gradually prepared them to accept the idea of general representation on behalf of the Imdm. By this token the latter changed from a representation by a designated individual to a more general line manifested in the just *mujtahid* (a legalist who arrives at an independent judgement), who has a keen

insight into the religious and worldly issues of the Muslims, in view of the transition from the minor to the major occultation.

Now you can have an idea about the situation, in the light of what has been discussed up to now, so you can clearly realize that al-Mahdi is a reality that a community of people has lived and which has been expressed for seventy years, by the representatives and the mediators of the Imam, whom no one could suspect of cheating nor of playing on words.

For can you imagine - by your Lord - that a he could survive for nearly seventy years, which four individuals would successively assume and agree upon and continue to interact with others on its basis as if it were a reality that they lived; that nothing would escape their control, which would cause a doubt in people's minds; that there would be no particular relation between the four through which they could gain the .trust of every-

one and their belief in the truth of the matter, which they pretend to live and feel?

An old proverb said, "The rope of lies is short"; also logic in life confirms the fact that it is impossible that a lie could survive in this way and for all time through these relations and still wins everyone's confidence.

Thus, the phenomenon of the minor occultation can be considered as a scientific experiment which has confirmed the factual objectivity of the Imdm's existence, his birth, life and occultation, on account of which he has been hidden from the world and has not revealed himself to anyone ever since.

(6) WHY HAS THE LEADER NOT APPEARED YET?

Why has the leader not appeared during all this long period? If he were really prepared to assume his social work? What prevented him from emerging during the period of the minor occultation or after, instead of extending it into a greater one, when the conditions for any social and transformative work were much simpler and easier and when the leader's relation with the people, owing to the minor occultation organizations, could have made it possible for him to organize the ranks and start the work with strength. Also the authorities

that existed then did not have that tremendous level of strength and power which humanity has achieved thanks to its technical and scientific evolution?

The answer is: That the success of any operation of social change is bound by certain conditions and objective circumstances without which it cannot achieve its aims.

However all the operations of social change that are sent to earth from heaven are marked by the fact that the contents of their message are not bound by any objective circumstance. Since the message on which the whole operation depends is of the Lord's making and is not created by these objective circumstances, but rather relies on them on its executive side as well as for its timing, heaven waited five centuries of ignorance *(al-jahiliyyah)* before sending its last message into the hands the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Alldh be upon him and his progeny),

since the connection that should exist between the objective circumstances and the execution required its postponement although the world had been waiting for it for a long time.

Among the objective circumstances that have an effect on the executive part in the operation of change, are those that create the right climate and the general atmosphere for the intended change, while others form some details required by the movement of change in its elaboration. For example, in the case of the operation of change led by Lenin in Russia, this operation. was connected to an important factor manifested in the first world war and the decline of the Tsar, which played a major part in creating the appropriate climate for the operation of change. It was also linked to partial and limited factors such Lenin's health, during his trip and when he entered Russia and led the revolution. For had he met with an incident while on his way, he would have been delayed and the revolution would have lost its

ability for that swift move.

However, the unchangeable custom of Allah in every Divine operation of change proceeded, in its executive side, in accordance with the objec tive circumstances that created the appropriate climate and the general atmosphere for its success.

Hence Islam came only after a great gap and long period which lasted for centuries after the messengers.

Although Alldh, the Exalted, could have overcome all the obstacles and difficulties that were on the way of the Divine message and created the appropriate climate by way of miracles, He prefered not to use such a style, since the tests, trials and the afflictions that make the human being perfect required that this Divine task be natural and objective.

However, this did not prevent Alldh, the Exalted, from interfering from time to time with

some details that did not shape the appropriate climate but which were sometimes needed for the movement within such a climate, such as the support that Alldh, the Exalted, bestows on his saints during some of their difficult moments, so as to protect the message. So suddenly Numrud's fire becomes cool and a peace for Ibrdhim. When the traitor's hand which was bearing the sword to strike the Prophet's hand was suddenly paralysed and lost its ability to strike, also when suddenly the storm swept away the unbelievers and the polytheists' camps, when they were encircling Medina, on the Day of the Ditch (yawmu'1-Khandaq), thus terrorizing them. However, all of these events did not go beyond certain details and the provision of assistance during some decisive moments after the appropriate atmosphere had been already formed for the operation of change in a natural way and in accordance with the objective circumstances.

In this light we can examine al-Mahdi's

position to find that the operation of change, for which he had been prepared, is linked, on the executive side, as is the case with any other operation of social change to certain objective circumstances that participate in securing the convenient climate under which it will occur.

We must bear in mind that al-Mahdi has not been prepared for a limited social task nor for an operation of change limited to a particular part of the world or another. Since the message which Alldh decreed for him has been a comprehensive change of the whole world and the leadership of humanity away from the darkness of transgression to the light of justice. However, it is not enough for this great operation that its message and its leader be made available, for otherwise its conditions would have been fulfilled in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Rather, an operation of such a scale requires a world-wide climate and a universal atmosphere which will fulfil the required objective circum-

stances for its realization.

From a human perspective we should consider the feeling that the man of civilization experiences of exhaustion as an essential factor for the creation of that appropriate climate, which paves the way for the acceptance of the new message of justice. This feeling is established and implanted through the various experiments of civilization, out of which man comes overloaded with negativism regarding what has been built, and realizes his need for help, thereupon turning with his natural disposition to the unseen or the unknown.

From a material angle, it is possible that modern conditions of life are better equipped to realize the aims of the message world-wide than the con ditions that existed in the previous periods - such as the period of the minor occultation - owing to what has been achieved in terms of shorter distances and a greater ease of interaction between the different nations of the world, as well as the

availability of instruments and means that a central organization needs in order to carry out its programme for the awareness of the different nations of the world and their education on the bases of the new message.

Yet what I hinted at here, which is a fact, is the growth of military strength and equipment that faces the leader of the appointed day when ever his appearance is delayed. But to what avail can the growth of the material aspect be, when they already exists a psychological defeat for it from within and the spiritual collapse of that man who possesses all these equipment and power?

Indeed many were the occasions, in history, when the gigantic structure of a whole civilization collapsed only with the smallest conquering ges ture. That was because it has been already falling apart and loosing confidence in its existence and trust in its reality.

(7) CAN AN INDIVIDUAL ASSUME THIS ROLE?

Now we have reached another question in this series which is: Can an individual, however great he may be, achieve this great role? Is not such an individual only that one who is selected by circumstances and faced with the realization of their movement?

The idea here, is related to a particular view of history which interprets the latter on the basis that man is only a secondary factor in it, while the objective strength that surrounds him is the

essentials. In this sense the individual can only be, in the best of situations, the intelligent expression to that essential factor.

However, we had already made it clear, in other chapters of our printed books, that history is made up of two poles: The first one being man and the second the material strength that surrounds him. Thus, while this material stength, the circumstances of production and nature affect man, the latter also exerts an influence upon them. Moreover, there is no evidence for the assumption that the movement starts from material conditions and ends up with man, except when there is an evidence for the contrary, since both factors interact in time. Therefore, within this framework, an individual can be more than a parrot in the historical trend, especially when we take into account his relation with heaven, since the latter intervenes, then, as a guiding power to this historical trend. That has been the case in the history of all the prophets, especially the last one since by virtue

of the relation of his message with heaven, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Alldh be upon him and his progeny), assumed by himself the reins of the historical movement and started a civilized expansion which the objective circumstances that existed around him, could not bring about in any case, as we have already mentioned in the introduction of *al-Fatawa al-wadihah.*

Therefore, what had been achieved at the hands of the Great Messenger could occur also at the hands of the Expected Leader from among his progeny whom he announced and whose role he hinted. at.

(8) HOW WILL THE CHANGE ON THE APPOINTED DAY OCCUR?

Now we have reached the last question, which is about the manner through which we can form an image about what will be accomplished at the hands of this individual in terms of a decisive victory for justice and an end to the existence of trangression that he is faced with?

The limited answer for this question is related to the knowledge of the time and the phase in which al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) is supposed to emerge to the world, as well as the possible

assumption regarding what peculiarities and close relations, might characterize that phase so as to be able to draw, in that light, the shape that the operation of change would take and the path that it would follow.

But as long as we do not know anything concerning that phase, its environment nor its circumstances, we cannot scientifically predict what would take place on the appointed day, although we can imagine or give certain assumptions in this respect, which are founded on theoretical bases and not on realistic grounds.

There is one basic assumption which we can adopt in the light of the previous narratives we mentioned earlier, as well as in the light of the great operations of change in the course of history, namely the appearance of al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) after a great gap which will result in a shocking decadence and a crisis is civilization. This gap will give the opportunity for the message

to expand and the decadence of civilization will prepare the psychological atmosphere for its acceptance.

However, this decadence in civilization is not a mere incident that will occur suddenly in the history of human civilization, but a natural result of a contradiction in a history that is cut off from Alldh the Exalted, that cannot reach a decisive solution of the end of its course, so that its fire will burn leaving nothing in its path and the light will then appear to establish Divine justice on earth.

THE END